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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes input from a communication panel of four State Directors of Special Education and one state staff member who helped develop an instrument for determining to what extent administrative, discretionary, and flow-through funds of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were being used to support school reform activities. The panel provided feedback on a telephone interview instrument which will be used to obtain information from selected states regarding Part B-funded initiatives. The revised telephone interview instrument is included. (Author/PB)

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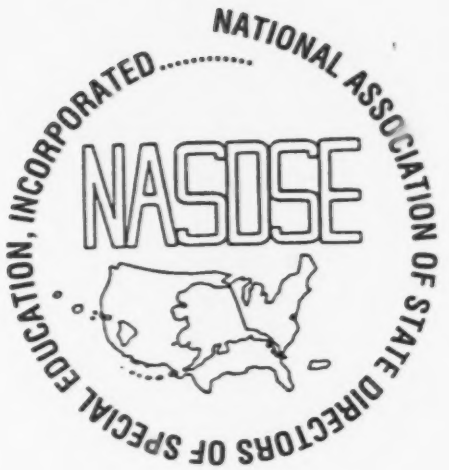
USE OF PART B FUNDS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL REFORM: A COMMUNICATION PANEL REPORT ON FRAMING THE TASK

By Judy A. Schrag Ed.D.



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ABSTRACT

Project FORUM, a contract funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education and located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) carries out a variety of activities that provide information needed for program improvement, and promote the utilization of research data and other information for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The project also provides technical assistance and information on emerging issues, and convenes small work groups to gather expert input, obtain feedback, and develop conceptual frameworks related to critical topics in special education.

This report summarizes the input from a Communication Panel of four State Directors of Special Education and one state staff member who provided guidance in framing the task to determine the extent to which Part B administrative, discretionary, and flow-through funds are being used to support school reform activities within the states. The Communication Panel provided specific feedback on a telephone interview instrument initially developed by FORUM staff which will be used to obtain information from selected states regarding Part B funded initiative. The revised telephone interview instrument is included within the report. Panel.

USE OF PART B FUNDS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL REFORM A COMMUNICATION PANEL REPORT ON FRAMING THE TASK

INTRODUCTION

All states are engaging in education reform activities including the implementation of GOALS 2000 plans and various on-going state and local school reform and restructuring initiatives. In some states, these school restructuring efforts have specific initiatives involving students with disabilities. In other states, the State Education Agency may have implemented statewide initiatives involving refinements and changes in programs and services for students with disabilities that relate directly or indirectly to specific statewide education reform efforts; e.g., enhanced coordination between special and general education as well as other categorical programs such as Chapter 1; inclusive school strategies; changes in assessment and evaluation; expanded parental involvement; changes in the state special education funding system; etc.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) through Project FORUM at NASDSE is exploring the extent to which Part B, IDEA funds are being utilized to support "school reform efforts". For purposes of this inquiry, "school reform efforts" are operationally defined as those activities that both directly and indirectly relate to the State GOALS 2000 plans and other identified statewide education reform initiatives. In addition, for purposes of this inquiry, use of Part B funds will include administrative, discretionary, and flow-through sources.

A Communication Panel, made up of four state directors of special education and one SEA staff member, was identified to assist Project FORUM staff with defining the content and parameters of a follow-up telephone interview of nine State Directors of Special Education to determine Part B uses for school reform. The Communication Panel specifically reviewed and provided feedback regarding a draft interview instrument. It is the purpose of this document to report the findings of feedback provided by the Communication Panel and to present the revised interview instrument.

METHOD

Previous NASDSE Work

In November 1994, NASDSE sent a survey to state directors of special education in the 50 states. This survey was intended to validate the results of an earlier NASDSE study (July, 1991) that investigated state education agencies' use of IDEA, Part B discretionary funds. As a part of this survey, a question was included that asked whether states had used their July, 1992 Part B discretionary funds to support school reform initiatives. Those states responding were asked to estimate the percentage of the total discretionary funds used for this purpose. Seventeen states responded that they had used Part B discretionary funds from their July, 1992 grant award for school reform efforts. Eighteen states responded no to this question. The seventeen states that answered yes to this question indicated that the percentage of their total discretionary funds (July, 1992 grant award) used for school reform efforts randged from 1.3 % to 100 % (median 11 percent and mean of 22.3 percent). An additional 14 states indicated that they had used discretionary funds from federal grant awards prior to July, 1992 for school reform activities, compared to nineteen states who had not used their prior discretionary funds for school reform. This survey provided helpful information, but did not seek specific information regarding the types of school reform activities supported by Part B discretionary funds. In addition, it did not provide information regarding school reform uses of Part B administrative or flow-through funds.

Selection of Communication Panel

A Communication Panel was identified to assist Project FORUM staff in developing an instrument to further explore states use of Part B funds. State directors of special education selected to participate on the FORUM Communication Panel represented states that reported uses of Part B funds for school reform in the 1994 NASDSE Survey, as well as those who have been in their positions for a period of time and could provide feedback regarding the feasibility and availability of information to be obtained. One SEA staff member was also selected who could provide feedback on whether the requested information could be easily obtained.

Development of Draft Telephone Interview Instrument

Project FORUM staff initially developed an instrument to be utilized in follow-up telephone interviews of nine state directors of special education for the purpose of determining Part B uses for school reform initiatives and activities. The draft instrument is found in Appendix A.

INPUT FROM COMMUNICATION PANEL

The following state directors of special education and SEA staff agreed to participate as members of the Communication Panel to review and comment on the draft interview instrument referenced above: Dr. Kathryn Lund, Arizona Department of Education; Dr. Martha Brooks, Delaware Department of Public Instruction; Ms. Jeanne Hagen, Iowa Department of Public Instruction; Mr. Lucian Parshall, Michigan Department of Education; and Mr. Lowell Harris, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

The draft interview instrument was faxed to the Communication Panel several days prior before to a scheduled telephone appointment to solicit their comments regarding the proposed follow-up telephone interviews and suggestions for modification of the draft instrument to be used in these interviews.

Following is a summary of Communication Panel feedback:

- In general, the draft interview form includes questions that state directors of special education could answer.
- It is important to be sensitive to the length of the interview form and the amount of time that state directors of education have to plan for the telephone call and to participate in the telephone discussion.
- Examples of school reform activities should be included as a part of question 1 or within an introductory paragraph.
- The interview form should begin with a reference to the three possible uses of Part B funds--discretionary, administrative, and flow-through.
- The interview form might also include the overall purpose within an introductory paragraph.
- The term "discretionary/set aside" funds should be used since some states refer to the 20% discretionary funds as set aside funds.
- The telephone interviews might begin with a question that asks how school reform is viewed within the state and what role special education is playing within school reform.
- Questions 1-3 are confusing with the years referenced. If information regarding the current school/fiscal year is what is needed, questions 1 and 2

should be dropped.

- Ranges could be used in questions 4, 7, and 9.
- Question 6 could be clarified.
- Question 7 should be clarified to reference activities of state staff funded by Part B.
- Questions 9 and 10 related to the use of flow-through funds would be difficult for state directors of special education to respond to without doing some additional research/review. Information regarding use of flow-through funds would be very "soft" and only a "questimate".
- If percentages of flow-through funds used for school reform are needed, funding ranges could be used.
- Question 11 could be revised to include the disadvantages or barriers in the use of Part B funds .
- Question 11 could include examples of possible responses.
- Question 11 should ask about the current political climate within the states that may be impacting the use of Part B funds so that the reader will understand the context within which responses are made. For example, SEAs may be currently pressured or required to flow additional discretionary funds directly to school districts leaving less discretionary funds for activities such support for school reform efforts.
- The interview instrument might ask for suggestions from state directors of special education regarding changes in IDEA re-authorization that would enhance or facilitate the use of IDEA funds for school reform.
- Specific feedback could be requested regarding the use of Part B funds for school reform activities within general education as well as by institutions of higher education for training purposes.
- Similar information should be collected about the use of Part B funds for transition, LRE system change, CSPD activities, etc.
- An additional question should be added: "What percentage of

discretionary/set aside funds do you retain at the state level.

The Communication Panel feedback was carefully reviewed and incorporated into a sample of the revised telephone interview instrument that follows.

USE OF PART B FUNDS FOR SCHOOL REFORM ACTIVITIES
Telephone Interview Form

The purpose of this telephone interview is to gather information from nine selected states regarding the use of Part B funds to support school reform activities. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows for the following uses of Part B funds: 5% for administration, 20% for discretionary/set aside funds, and 75% flow through funds This survey gathers information regarding all three uses of Part B funds.

Within this interview, school reform is operationally defined as those activities that both directly and indirectly relate to an identified statewide general education reform initiative, the State's GOALS 2000 plan, and/or an identified special education initiative or effort that directly or indirectly relates to education reform in the State.

1. What percentage of discretionary/set aside funds do you retain to be used for state initiatives or projects?

2. Briefly describe the extent to which a focus on students with disabilities is included within your State's school reform efforts.

3. Are you using Part B discretionary/set aside funds to support school reform activities during the current fiscal year (1994-1995). Please check those that apply:

PART B FUNDS				
Discretionary (Please check)		Administrative Flow-Thorugh (including SEA staff time)		School Reform Activity
				Activities related to changes in assessment of students disabilities
				Projects or activities that focus on standards for students with disabilities
				Projects or activities that specifically focus on improved outcomes for students with disabilities
				Activities related to the State's GOALS 2000 plan
				Activities directly related to a statewide school reform initiative
				Support for staff development for general education personnel (teachers or principals) to work with students with disabilities
				Support for pre-service training projects focused on increasing the skills of general education personnel to work with students with disabilities
				Interagency coordination activities
				Programs, projects, or activities that relate to increased coordination between special education, Chapter 2, other support programs, and general education
				Parental involvement initiatives
				Studies of the state special education funding system, state policies regarding pre-referral intervention, coordination between general and special education, inclusion, etc.
				Support of project that support inclusion of students with disabilities in general education
				Support of Technology Projects

4. Briefly describe the school reform activities supported by Part B that were checked above.

5. What is the estimated percentage of your total Part B budget for this year that is being used to support school reform efforts checked above:

(Please check appropriate range) 1-5% 6-10% 11-15% 16-20% +20%

Administrative					
Discretionary/Set Aside					
Flow-Through					

6. Please describe any Part B supported school reform initiative, project, or activity that you are planning, but that has not yet been initiated.

7. Please describe any activities occurring in your state that currently or potentially may impact your use of Part B funds for school reform (e.g., move toward more local flexibility, re-organization of the SEA, de-regulation, priorities of new Chief or Governor, etc.).

8. Do you have any recommendations related to changes in IDEA re-authorization that could facilitate the use of Part B funds for school reform activities? If so, briefly describe.

9. Do you have any other comments regarding the use of Part B funds for school reform activities?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A Communication Panel of five State Directors of Special Educationand a SEA staff member was formed to assist Project FORUM's in obtaining information regarding state's use of Part B funds for school reform initiatives. A telephone interview protocol was developed and will be used to capture data from nine selected state directors of special education. This follow-up inquiry is intended to gather information regarding the extent to which Part B funds (administrative, discretionary/set aside, and flow-through) are being used to support specific school reform initiatives, projects, and activities. Based on feedback of the Communication Panel, the draft telephone interview protocol/instrument has been revised. The results of the follow-up nine-state interview activity will be analyzed and reported in a separate FORUM report.

APPENDIX A

Draft Telephone Interview Instrument

USE OF PART B FUNDS FOR SCHOOL REFORM ACTIVITIES

Telephone Interview

1. In a recent NASDSE survey, you indicated that your State utilized discretionary funds in your 7-92 Part B grant award for activities related to school reform. Please describe these activities and their relationship to school reform in your State.

2. In which year were these discretionary funded (7-92 Part B grant award) activities carried out?

   1992-1993 _____
   1993-1994 _____
   1994-1995 _____

3. If you did not indicate the current year, 1994-1995, are you utilizing Part B discretionary funds during the current school year (1994-1995) to support school reform activities in your state?

   Yes _____
   No _____

4. If yes, please estimate the percentage of Part B discretionary funds that will be expended during the current school year (1994-1995) for activities related to school reform.

5. Please describe these activities and their relationship to overall school reform activities in your state.

6. Describe any Part B discretionary funded activity which relates to education reform in your State that you are planning, but have not yet initiated.

7. What is the total estimated percentage of your administrative Part B funds that will be expended on school reform activities during the current school year (1994-1995) (e.g., participation in department-wide school reform collaborative efforts, participating in interagency activities, participation in Goals 2000 activities, participation in school reform committees, etc.).

8. Please describe these activities and their relationship to overall school reform activities in your state.

9. Please estimate the percentage of your flow-through funds that will be expended during the current school year (1994-1995) for school reform activities.

10. Please describe these Part B flow-through supported school reform activities.

11. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages of the use of Part B discretionary, administrative, and/or flow-through funds for school reform activities.